

1.4. Developing Speaking Skills

Session Aims

By the end of the session, you will have:

- ☐ a clear picture of what the IELTS speaking exam entails.
- ☐ identified students' problems and how to deal with them.
- ☐ identified the key skills tested for speaking.
- ☐ practised and analysed activities to develop some of these skills.

Before we start – *Just a minute!*

Task 1

Read the following text and fill in the gaps using words or numbers.

IELTS Speaking is usually between (1) and (2) minutes long. Speaking tests are (3) on cassette.

Part 1 lasts about (4) minutes. The examiner introduces him/herself and checks the candidate's (5) and asks questions about some (6) topics.

Part 2 lasts about (7) minutes. The (8) is given a (9) with a topic and some prompts printed on it and has (10) minute to prepare a talk. S/he is given (11) and (12) so that h/she can make (13) to help him/her. H/she talks about the topic for (14) minutes.

In **Part 3** the (15) and the (16) discuss the topic in Part 2 in a more (17) way. This part lasts about (18) minutes.

Activity type: Gap-fill

- ☐ Is this activity useful for your students?
- ☐ How might you adapt it?
- ☐ What learning points can you take away with you?

Student Problems and Weaknesses

Task 1

Define the criteria of the speaking exam. Remember, your trainer will not tell you anything which is not already published and widely available by Cambridge. This is an opportunity to clarify these terms from an ELT perspective.

- ☐ Fluency and Coherence
- ☐ Lexical Resource
- ☐ Grammatical Range and Accuracy
- ☐ Pronunciation

Check your definitions with the definitions on page 12 of the IELTS handbook.

Task 2

Your trainer will give you a piece of flip chart with one of the assessment criteria.

In your groups:

1. Double-check the definition of the criteria and make notes on the table overleaf to ensure you focus on exactly what the criteria is looking for.
2. Discuss the variety of specific student problems/weaknesses you are familiar with that fall under the criteria you have been given.
3. Consider possible solutions to these problems.
4. Form new groups and share your information. Use the table overleaf to record your ideas.

Activity type: Information Gap

- ☐ Why is this activity type useful for your students?
- ☐ How might you adapt it?
- ☐ What skills can it develop?

Criteria	Weakness	Corrective technique
Fluency and coherence		
Lexical resource		
Grammatical range and accuracy		
Pronunciation		

Interview Role Plays Part 1 – Student A

Using the following sample prompt cards, in pairs, interview each other for **Part 1** of the IELTS speaking exam and record your feedback on the checklist provided by your trainer.

Now let's talk about free time.

- What is your favourite hobby or pastime?
- When did you first start doing this activity?
- How often do you do this?
- How many of your friends share this hobby?

Now let's talk about travel.

- How often do you travel in your country?
- Do you usually travel long distances by bus, car, train or other?
- Do you prefer to travel alone or with someone? (Why?)
- What new place would you like to visit in your country? (Why?)

Interview Role Plays Part 1 – Student B

Using the following sample prompt cards, in pairs, interview each other for **Part 1** of the IELTS speaking exam and record your feedback on the checklist provided by your trainer.

Let's talk about colours.

- What is your favourite colour? (Why?)
- Do some colours change your mood? (How?)
- Do you like bright colours in your house? (Why/Why not?)
- What do think about people who colour their hair?

Now let's talk about sport.

- Do you play any sports?
- Do you enjoy playing sport or watching it? (Why?)
- Which sports are popular in your country? (Why?)
- Which sports are not popular in your country? (Why?)

Speaking role plays – part 2 ‘The long turn’

This activity comes from the IELTS Teaching resources website, which has a fantastic range of materials that you can use in the classroom. Let’s try this one!

Keep Going!

Aim:	to practise maintaining a long turn Variation – to practise fillers and devices to give thinking time
Target Audience:	students
Relevance to IELTS:	Speaking Part 2
Organisation:	whole class or groups
Materials needed:	board

1. Elicit random words from students, in any way you prefer (e.g. words beginning with the first letter of the day you do it) and write them anywhere on the board. (They needn’t be very interesting words – it’s better if they aren’t!)
2. When you have a few more words than students in your class, tell the students to choose one word each, but don’t tell them why. Write the name of the student next to ‘their’ word.
3. When everyone has a word, tell them that they must speak about their topic for 1 minute, however little they think there is to say.

Notes/Variations:

- This can also be a useful exercise following work on hesitation devices, when you can add the extra instruction that they give as little information as possible but keep going. However, make sure they understand that this variation is to practise using hesitation devices, not what they should do in the test itself.
- If you have a lot of words on the board at the beginning, or they look too easy to talk about, ask the students to choose the most interesting words, and then rub them out.

Interview role plays – Part 3

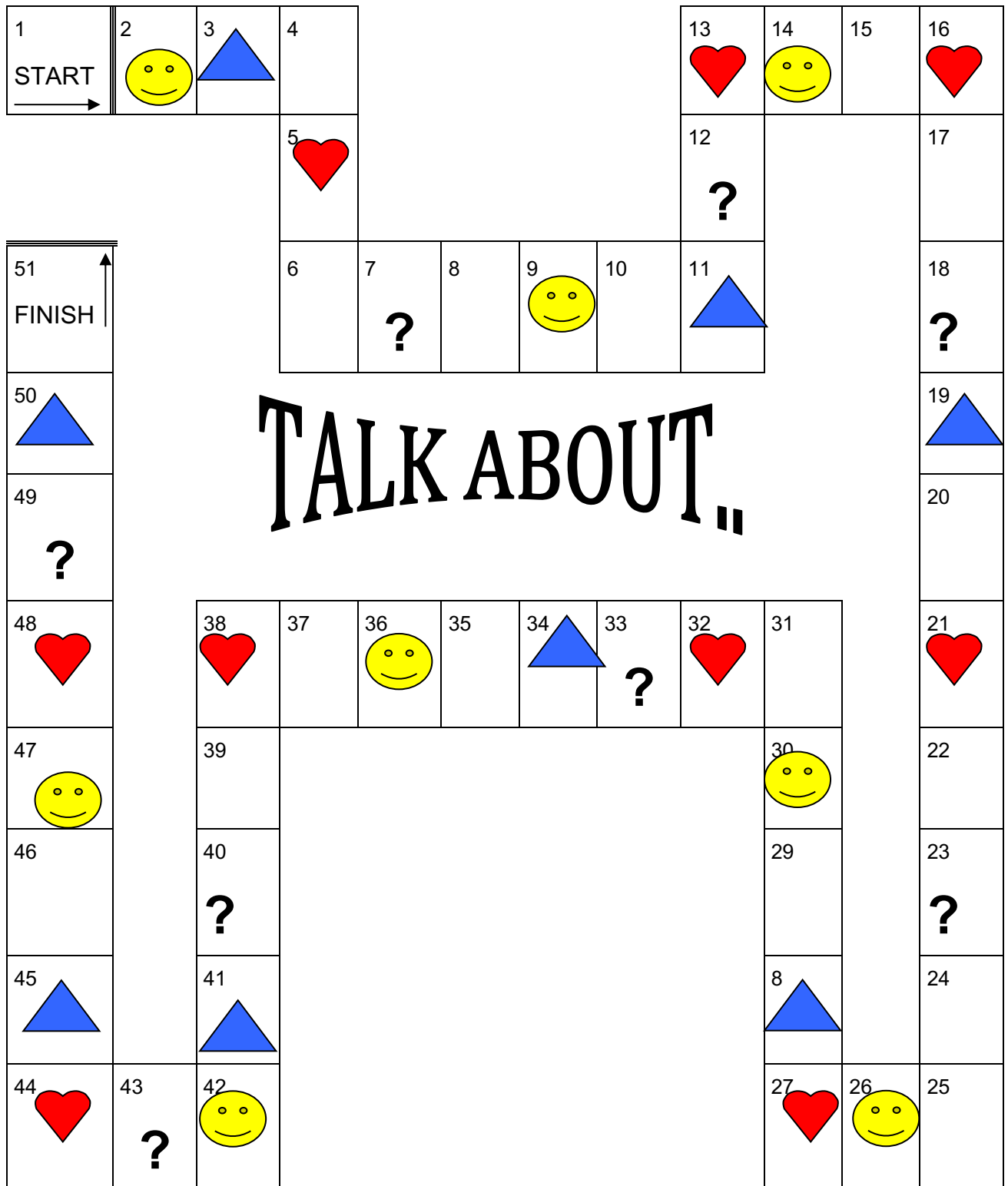
*Using the following sample prompt cards, in pairs, interview each other for **Part 3** of the IELTS speaking exam and record your feedback on the checklist provided by your trainer.*

We have been talking about **a sport you enjoy**. Let's discuss this further.

- Sport is supposed to be open to people of all classes, race, religion, and background – how true is this in your country?
- Some countries have a bad record in controlling the use of drugs in professional sport. How efficient is the sports authority in your country?
- How will spectator sports (e.g. sports that are televised) change in the future?

We have been talking about **your favourite colour**. Let's discuss this further.

- Do you think colours reflect people's moods and personalities?
- Do you think the kind of colours people like has changed over the last 20 years?
- What kind of colours will be popular for people to decorate their homes with in twenty years' time?



Activity type: Board Game

- ☐ Is this activity useful for your students?
- ☐ How might you adapt it?
- ☐ What learning points can you take away with you?

Top Take Away Tips for Developing Speaking Skills

Look at the following sentences and rank them in order of importance. (Write 1 for most important and 12 for least important.) Do this individually first then compare your opinions with your group and try to reach consensus. Once you have reached your final decisions, do the ranking exercise again as a group.

A	It is vital that you give your students constructive feedback on their speaking skills after any speaking activity.	
B	Ensure all feedback you give focuses on the assessment criteria used in the IELTS Speaking exam.	
C	Use English yourself at all times, outside as well as inside the classroom.	
D	Encourage students to speak in English even when on their own. Talking to yourself while shopping or at home. For example, talking yourself through your plans for the next day/ reflecting on what happened yesterday/during that day.	
E	Give students the opportunity to speak without interrupting them to correct them.	
F	Integrate speaking into all skills work. This way your students will see speaking in English as a more natural activity – not something they just do in controlled, isolated bouts.	
G	Encourage students to read outside class and bring in articles/stories they have read into class for discussion. This way, they are using language in context and the impetus for discussion comes from them. This will increase their motivation and sense of achievement.	
H	Use recorded material in the classroom to expose students to good models of sounds, intonation, and stress patterns and ask them to mimic what they hear.	
I	Use games and competitions to help develop student's speaking skills. This will provide them with a less threatening context to speak without thinking too much about what they are saying. It is important to focus on fluency for fluency's sake.	
J	If students are reluctant to speak in English, use pair and group work rather than asking them to speak in front of the whole class or you.	
K	Create a comfortable atmosphere for a speaking activity – use music, experiment with lighting, space etc.	
L	When planning a speaking activity, decide which role you are going to adopt – joining/helping/observing and stick to it throughout the activity.	

Activity type: Ranking exercise

- ☐ Is this activity useful for your students?
- ☐ How might you adapt it?
- ☐ What learning points can you take away with you?

Speaking Session - Action Plan

I learned

When I get back to work, I am going to

I would like to know more about

I am going to find out this by